



# Happiness Pony

– FIRST – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –

HAPPINESSPONY.COM

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2013.

A GIFT.

If beatniks and not illuminated Beat poets overrun this country, they will have been created not by Kerouac but by industries of mass communication which continue to brainwash man.

Allen Ginsberg

## A Turtle Boy of one's own.



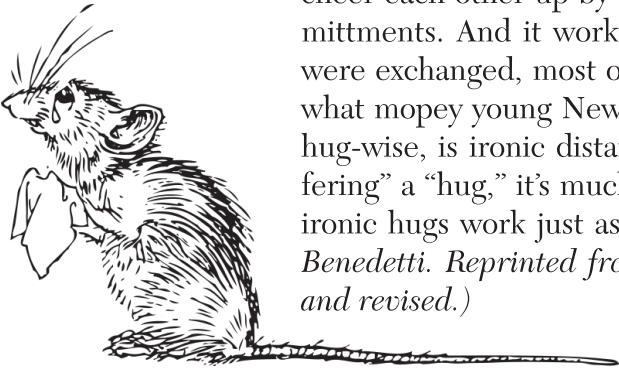
The “Boy with a Turtle” statue behind City Hall is no doubt Worcester’s greatest symbol. We have created a 3-dimensional digital model of the Turtle Boy that can be printed on a 3D printer. Or, you can order your own 3 3/4-inch tall Turtle Boy statuette. For more details, please visit: [landlubber.com/turtleboy](http://landlubber.com/turtleboy)

In a little square garden of yellow roses, beside the sea, said Auberon Quin, there was a Nonconformist minister who had never been to Wimbledon. His family did not understand his sorrow or the strange look in his eyes. But one day they repented their neglect, for they heard that a body had been found on the shore, battered, but wearing patent leather boots. As it happened, it turned out not to be the minister at all. But in the dead man’s pocket there was a return ticket to Maidenstone.

G.K. Chesterton,  
The Napoleon of Notting Hill



Cable access for Worcester on channel 13. [wccatv.com](http://wccatv.com)



## “Whatever you do, don’t sleep too much.”

*The longer you stay in bed, the harder it is to get out and depression will quickly creep in. Set your alarm. Jump out of bed and play one, just one angry song to get your blood pumping and to scare away the alienation. Make coffee and toast & run out of the house. You must get outside as fast as possible to avoid despair.*

—Cindy Crabb

Cindy Crabb cuts to the truth in *Doris: An Anthology*. I read this 1991–2001 collection of Crabb’s zine at a numb time in my life and have returned to it when I needed to remember how to live. It touches on friendship, sobriety, activism, recovering from trauma, and staying hopeful when the world is the mess. Nestled inside is the “anti depression guide” filled with simple steps that were actionable to me at a time in my life when few things were. Get out of bed, ASAP. Go for walks. Maybe you’ll see something that will pull you out of yourself. Have a project. Her language is plain and her drawing is full of adorable stick figures. The combination reminds the reader that the world is harsh but also filled with whimsical, beautiful things. Cindy Crabb shares an immense part of herself and through this act of sharing shows it is a way to healing. (Jen Burt)



## Depression Club & the Hug-Based Initiative

Depression Club was a failure. The ground rules were simple: if you were prone to depression, and would commit to a six-month membership, club members would cheer you up as needed. On any day you were feeling happy, you would return the favor. Trouble is, depressed people don’t want other people in their business. Within one week, everyone in Depression Club claimed to be OK, but none of them were.

The follow-up was the “Hug-Based Initiative.” Somehow, we would cheer each other up by hugging. There were no specifics and no commitments. And it worked great. Within the first day, dozens of hugs were exchanged, most of them in mockery of the initiative. Turns out, what mopey young New Englanders need to get them over the hump, hug-wise, is ironic distance. When you’re not offering a hug, but “offering” a “hug,” it’s much easier to offer a hug, and to accept one. And ironic hugs work just as well as non-ironic ones. Don’t despair. (Mike Benedetti. Reprinted from the October 2011 issue of *Happiness Pony* and revised.)

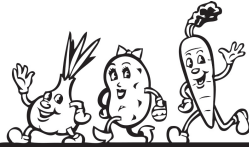


## PANDA PANDA BLING BLING



The Diggers  
Landscaping Cooperative  
A worker cooperative specializing in all landscaping both fine and sundry. Also permaculture. (774) 314-7DIG

## Belmont Vegetarian Restaurant



Worcester’s best vegan eatery.  
Tues-Sat 11AM-8PM  
157 Belmont St, Worcester, Mass.  
Delivery: 508-798-8898

### CLASSIFIED ADS

#### BOOKS, YIDDISH+ENGLISH

**Not In The Same Breath** by Zackary Sholem Berger: 1/3 Yiddish, 1/3 English, 2/3 Pretty Pictures. [bit.ly/NITSBAmazon](http://bit.ly/NITSBAmazon)

**Cat In The Hat and Curious George** in Yiddish. [yiddishcat.com](http://yiddishcat.com)

#### MUGS, TIKI

**Scallywag Ceramics.** Exotic curiosities. [scallywagceramics.com](http://scallywagceramics.com)

#### HAPPINESS PONY Income Statement November 2013

Revenue	
Donations from editors	\$47.50
Ad sales	\$0.00
Other donations	\$0.00

Expenses	
500 copies	\$42.50
Test copies	\$5.00

Net Income	\$0.00
------------	--------

Happiness Pony is a free monthly newspaper published in Worcester, Massachusetts. This issue was edited by Shane Capra, Jen Burt, & Mike Benedetti. Masthead by Aiden Duffy from a 1775 issue of the *Massachusetts Spy*.

[editor@happinesspony.com](mailto:editor@happinesspony.com)

First, don't think of this guide as a solution, but as a way to think about finding the solution. Be active. Do research. Try a bunch of things, just to break out of the place you are stuck. Then, try to figure out which things really make a difference.

**1 Do something easy to start.** To start, do something super easy that's likely to make a small difference. You need to see that you don't have to feel this way and it's not a permanent feeling. One easy thing is to try St. John's Wort or a general mood support supplement. Don't take this if you are taking a prescription anti-depressant. Who knows, you might feel 100% better, but even if it's just a 20% difference, you're making headway.

**2 Get some tests.** This is also super easy—call your doctor right now and make an appointment for blood work and to talk about your depression. If you are depressed most of the time, it's very, very likely that you have some underlying health imbalance.

Be aggressive about what you want tested. In addition to whatever your doctor suggests, also ask for: Vitamin D levels (25 Hydroxy D<sub>3</sub> test); comprehensive thyroid test (TSH, antibodies, T<sub>3</sub>, RT<sub>3</sub>, T<sub>4</sub>); cortisol saliva test (this test is done at home over the course of a day); iron; B-vitamins; testosterone (even if you are a woman).

If you find something wrong, that's great news! It means you have a concrete problem to fix. See what your doctor thinks you should do. And become your own expert on the problem. Add the word "pubmed" to your Google searches to find academic research. See what self-experimenters and support groups have to say. These groups are highly motivated to find real solutions!

**3 Diet, Nutrition, Lifestyle.** A lot of people who aren't depressed think it's easy to just say: "Hey, eat a healthy diet, get more exercise, and you'll feel better." But changing your diet and lifestyle can be really hard for anyone and especially if you feel like crap already.

Don't feel guilty if you can't easily make big changes, but see if you can do a couple easy things. It adds up.

- Less sugar. The only thing that pretty much every diet expert agrees on, from vegetarians to paleo diet to low fat to low carb, is that sugar is bad. And it makes you feel like crap. Try to eat very little. Definitely stop drinking soda.
- Exercise. Is there a sport or some physical activity that you really like? Or that you've always wanted to try? Sign up for a class, join a club, setup a regular time to play it with friends. This is about finding something you like, not doing something you hate.
- Vitamins. You probably have deficiencies. Modern soil and farming leaves food depleted. If you don't like taking pills or you think you can't stick with it, then don't force it. But if you're like me, and you think it's an easy way to feel better, I suggest these basics:
  - Vitamin D. 2000–5000 IU in the morning. This is especially important if you are not a white person!
  - Fish oil. Two or three a day. Get an "odorless" kind.
  - Magnesium Glycinate. 200 or 400mg per day. Most people are deficient. Helps promote calmness, helps digestion.
  - Probiotics. Super important for digestion, gut health, etc.
  - Vitamin C. Pretty much everyone thinks taking 1000mg of vitamin C is a good idea.
- Do research!! Do you have other specific health issues like insomnia, joint pain, or dry skin? It's likely that if you can figure out the underlying causes of those problems, you'll also be helping to improve your mood.
- Get more sun. This might be hard depending where you live, but you'll probably feel better and your natural circadian rhythms will get in tune.
- Work less. Only an option for some people, but it appears to have a big effect. See: "Really? The Claim: Long Work Hours Can Cause Depression" (*New York Times*).
- Sleep. The relationship between depression and insomnia seems to be powerful and complicated. See: "Sleep Therapy Seen as an Aid to Depression" (*New York Times*).

**4 Keep talking to your doctor.** The problem with most doctors is they have little time to spend with patients, they want to prescribe something that's likely to work right away, and they have weird med-school personalities which mold them into thinking that pharmaceuticals are the most effective tools for most problems. This is very true in certain areas—like acute injuries or chemotherapy or HIV—and very not true for depression. The drugs aren't that effective and they have many side effects. If you can fix your depression without using anti-depressants, you're more likely to have solved the root of the problem.

But also: don't be fucking dogmatic about not taking anti-depressants! They do help a lot of people and they help certain types of depression more than others. If you are feeling stuck and you've been depressed for a while, prescription drugs might make you feel a million times better. It might be the boost you need to follow through on other approaches. Being depressed is not just being sad, it's being completely demotivated and demoralized. Your first priority is to get motivated to feel better, so do whatever it takes to get going again.

And don't believe that if you take drugs for depression you'll be giving up your "real" personality or your true brooding artistic self. That's bullshit. Feeling depressed is not your real personality, it's a fucking problem that keeps you from feeling like your true, free self. Ask someone who used to be depressed and isn't anymore.

**5 Therapy.** Therapy can be very effective, and "cognitive behavioral therapy" seems to have the best outcomes scientifically. Therapy is expensive. Even if you have insurance, you may have to pay \$20 or \$40 or more for each appointment. But if you can afford it, it's a wonderful and, for many people, extremely helpful process. It can even feel like a delightful luxury, a relaxing, cathartic weekly brain massage. Make sure you take the time to find a therapist you like.

This is maybe a good place to talk about specialists. Specialists are great. They get very, very good at one particular thing, and when we need that thing, we're glad they are there. If you need surgery, you can be glad that you have a doctor who's been practicing surgery for years and years.

But experts also tend to be narrow. If you go to a nutritionist, they'll tell you that your mood problems are just nutrition. If you go to a psychiatrist, they may

## Q: How often do you feel depressed?

## A: I feel depressed pretty much all the time.

just give you anti-depressants. If you go to a therapist, they may convey the idea that the only reason you are feeling bad is your history, your attachments, etc., etc. This stuff is huge and it's a factor for almost everyone. But it's rarely the whole story. And that goes for every item on this list, not just therapy.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is very practical and worth looking into. Here's the three sentence version, which you can do right now: Make a list of all the things you're feeling bad about in your life. Next to each item, write down what your worst fear is. Then write down what is actually the more likely reality. Do this daily or weekly. It usually works.

**6 Self Therapy, Books, Etc.** Yes, you should be a little skeptical of self-help and therapy books. It can be very hard to know what to trust and it can all seem a little too salesy.

But! If you've never seriously read a self-help book and you've never really written about your fears, anxieties, stresses, desires, insecurities, then you should try it at least once.

If you feel vaguely embarrassed about the idea, even just doing it privately by yourself, then it's a very good sign that you are holding on tightly to some things that you should examine. Don't try to be too cool for this and don't judge it until you try it with one of the more reputable books.

And in fact, several studies have shown that self-help books and self-guided therapy are more effective than anti-depressants. A 2013 study that comes to that conclusion is "Guided Self-Help Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Depression in Primary Care: A Randomised Controlled Trial."

Search for "bibliotherapy pubmed" to find more.

Two of the books that are most studied, and considered most reputable, are *Overcoming Depression and Low Mood* and *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*. Are these the best books for curing depression? Who knows! But they certainly aren't the worst.

**7 Meditation and Consciousness.** According to some neuroscientists, the "happiest man in the world" is the Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard, who has spent decades meditating. Professor Richard Davidson says, "We've found remarkable results with long-term practitioners who did 50,000 rounds of meditation, but also with three weeks of 20 minutes a day, which of course is more applicable to our modern times."

Meditation can be an amazing experience. If you haven't seriously tried it, it's worth doing. Maybe signup for a weekend retreat at a nearby meditation center.

But, like exercise, meditation is hard work and can be hard to keep up with regularly if it doesn't speak to you. So try it, but don't feel pressured.

One of my personal heroes, Ram Dass, is a former Harvard psychologist who began working with psychedelics and became deeply spiritual. It's very worth subscribing to his podcast or listening to a talk on YouTube. His book *Be Here Now* is amazing.

One the most useful ideas that he lays out is learning to observe and watch your feelings rather than identify with them. Instead of thinking "I am depressed" realize that you aren't the depression and just think "there is depression." This might sound a little vague, but if you try it for a while, you can really learn to find some relief and freedom in painful, difficult moments. Seeing feelings come and go can make you so much less trapped.

Psychedelics can be a helpful gateway to openness and relief and show incredible results in clinical trials, which are paving the way for them to be re-legalized. You can learn more about using them at howtousepsychedelics.org.

**8 Don't believe everything you think.** One of the things that makes depression so difficult is that, especially in intellectual types, it affects our thought processes at a deep level, and it seems to justify itself. You might be thinking:

- I'm not depressed, I just realized that everyone is fake and so I'm sad.
- I don't like going out because it's stupid, I'm just going to stay home all the time.
- I don't like my friends anymore, I'm bored when I hang out with them.
- Everything seems pointless and here's all the reasons why everything is pointless.
- I've grown out of being interested in all the stuff I used to like, now I don't like anything.

And here's what's confusing—the root of those feelings is coming from depression, whether it has a physical cause, a psychological cause, a trauma cause, whatever. The root of all those feelings comes from that place, but then our thinking minds are able to start coming up with explanations and justifications and reasons why this is right. And we're smart enough to take some observations that are a little bit true and magnify them to an entire negative, flat, worldview.

If you want an explanation from a real psychologist, check out the amazing book *The Righteous Mind*. It makes it very clear that most explanation and justification about what we think comes after we already have a decision made at a gut level. Very worth reading.

But the point is this: whatever bullshit your brain is telling you about why it makes sense that you are always sad or always uninterested in the world and whatever bullshit you are telling your friends and loved ones to justify your moods, is just bullshit. If you actually make a sincere effort at some of the things on this list, we can virtually guarantee that your "logical" evaluations of your life and the world will shift dramatically.

Ignore the thoughts that you have which justify the depression and believe in the experience of millions of people who've come before you: when you get really healthy at a mental and physical level, you will feel love and pleasure from life. Not because you have a good reason to, but just because it will feel good spontaneously.

Now get started.  
(Written by Abigail Cable. The editors of Happiness Pony agree with some of this article, disagree with some, and are grateful to Ms. Cable for allowing us to run it. None of us are medical professionals, and this article is not medical advice. It is for informational purposes only, and reflects one person's experience. Do your own research and talk to a doctor. Don't disregard or delay getting medical advice because of anything here. We cannot take any responsibility for the consequences of using any of the information presented.)